

Westmacott Charles Molloy

The Punster's Pocket-book



Charles Westmacott

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Содержание

A WORD TO THE WITTY AND THE WISE	7
PROLEGOMENA ON PUNNING	9
THE ORIGIN OF PUNNING: FROM PLATO'S SYMPOSIACKS	15
ARS PUN-ICA, SIVE FLOS LINGUARUM;	17
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	28

Charles Molloy Westmacott
The Punster's Pocket-book / or, the
Art of Punning Enlarged by Bernard
Blackmantle, illustrated with numerous
original designs by Robert Cruikshank

TO

His Most Gracious Majesty,

KING GEORGE THE FOURTH,

THE ARBITER ELEGANTIARUM,

THE PATRON,

THE LOVER,

AND THE JUDGE OF WIT,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS DEDICATED,

WITH THE MOST FERVENT LOYALTY,

THE MOST SINCERE ADMIRATION,

AND THE MOST PROFOUND RESPECT,

BY HIS DEVOTED SERVANT,

AND FAITHFUL SUBJECT,

BERNARD BLACKMANTLE

A WORD TO THE WITTY AND THE WISE

Wit led the way – with sportive jest,
Next, Humour, most fantastic drest;
The Graces, eldest of the Nine,
Followed – collecting from each shrine,
Where Genius shed a ray of light,
Which might improve, instruct, delight.

Messieurs the Punsters,

I may with great propriety contend, that under such merry designation, I am addressing a very large portion of the British public. If, beneath your patronage, this little work should prove as successful as the flattering anticipations of some friendly adepts in the art of punning have induced me to expect, it is my intention to collect and publish, annually, all the choicest *Morceaux* and Vagaries relating to punning that can be obtained from the wits and witty works of our own times: for which purpose I solicit communications of *original* Puns and Epigrams, directed to my Publishers. In arranging the present work, I have endeavoured to bring together all that was important to a proper understanding of the Merry Art; to which are annexed examples by the most celebrated Punsters of their day; many of which now, for the first time, appear in print. Illustrated by fourteen original and appropriate designs, from that mirth-inspiring graphic humourist, Robert Cruikshank.

For mine own whims, scattered here and there through the work, they will, I have no doubt, be easily discovered, by their very humble pretensions to any right of admission into the phalanx of great names in whose company they are now associated. But, Wits and Critics, as ye are powerful, be merciful; and remember, that taste and industry for such a task are the great requisites of a compiler, and that it is not essentially necessary for a *good* collector to be a *great* artist.

BERNARD BLACKMANTLE,

Author of the English Spy, Editor of The Spirit of the Public Journals, &c. &c.

THE FRONTISPIECE

Portrait of his Majesty George the Fourth

DRAWN FROM THE LIFE BY WAGEMAN, AND ENGRAVED

BY WOLNOTH

Explanation of the Emblematic Border to the Portrait of the King, containing an Epitome of British Sovereignty.

The Genius of Ancient Britain is represented by a Druidical head encircled by a wreath of oak; the face is partly hidden behind the blazonry of modern achievement. The head, supported by the Roman eagle and the Saxon horse, is inclosed in the involutions of the scroll which proceeds from it, and which next embraces the devouring eagle of Scandinavia, and the warlike lion of Normandy.

Following these are emblems of the contests of the houses of York and Lancaster, surrounded by the rival roses. The Scriptures opened are appropriate to the Tudor family; and their national emblem, the thistle, is considered most emblematical of the Stuart race. A lion, with the cap of liberty, denotes the benefits England has derived from their successors, the Prince of Orange; and the unicorn chained to the scroll is indicative of Hanover attached to the sovereignty of Great Britain. The imperial crown of Charlemagne, which surmounts Brunswick, is nearly obscured and lost behind the crown and sceptre of a British sovereign, George the Fourth,

WHOM GOD PRESERVE

PROLEGOMENA ON PUNNING

RESPECTFULLY ADDRESSED

TO PUNSTERS IN GENERAL

LITERARY FIREWORKS

What are Puns, and Jests, and Quirks?
But Literary *Fireworks*.

Here are *squibs* for dull November;
Crackers, too, for gay December;
Rockets, charged with wit and fun;
Wild-fires made to touch and run;
Blue-lights from the Em'rald Isle;
British-balls, to chase the bile;
Roman fires, and *jeux d'esprits*;
From Vatican, and Thuilleries;
And here's Blackmantle – punning elf —
To personate Guy Vaux himself.

It will doubtless be the opinion of many a reader that a Prefatory Essay on such a subject as *Punning* can possess little of interest, and nothing of novelty. I would, however, request any one entertaining this idea to suspend his judgment till he has given the matter ampler consideration.

In addressing these preliminary remarks to punsters in general, I think I have taken effectual means to render them of universal interest. When a certain author, who had dedicated one of his volumes "*to those who think*," was charged with want of judgment in catering for such a limited number of individuals, he justified his discernment by observing, that, however little numerous the body of *thinking people* might be, every reader would at least rank himself in that class. Our question can stand on much broader ground; for we assert, without fear of contradiction, that of the many judicious persons who, without doubt, will peruse and patronise these pages, not one will be found who is not only, *se judice*, a punster, but who has not, probably "many a time and oft," exhibited among his boon companions whatever portion of talent he may possess in that line of wit. It has been asked by a well-known writer, "Did any man of liberal education ever go through his teens without perpetrating the crime of making verses?" I am contented to wave the narrow distinction, by which uneducated persons would be excepted, and, with respect to the nobler and far more generally diffused art of punning, would inquire, Does any one, whatever be his rank or attainments, reach his twentieth year, without (we will not speak so inaccurately as to say, *perpetrating the crime*, but) contributing one or more puns to the common stock? Certainly not. What the ancients rather hyperbolically asserted of writing (for the many, who were uninstructed in the mechanical part of that art, could not by possibility have exercised it), *Scribimus indocti doctique*, is literally true as applied to punning: lettered and unlettered, all alike pun away. From the humble son of Crispin, who, having nothing but one of

his sutorial weapons at hand wherewith to despatch his *cotelette de bœuf*, remarked that *his all was at stake*, to the gifted Sheridan, who discovered that Doctors' Commons was the greatest thoroughfare in England, in virtue of the old adage, "where there is a WILL there is a WAY," each man sports his *calembourg*.

Still, as it frequently happens that what is most generally practised, is far from being best understood, so is it with punning. It has been too much the case to treat it with levity and inconsiderateness; to regard it as mere trifling; to view it at best as a feeble missile from the armoury of wit, only adapted for the "puny (query *punny*?) whipster," and which those who are qualified to wield more valuable weapons would scarcely deign to employ. I trust that, in the course of these introductory observations, I shall effectually dispel all such erroneous prejudices, and shall satisfactorily assert the true dignity of the art, so that my readers may join with me in exclaiming, and may perceive, that it is not only venerable from its antiquity, and supported by the authority of persons of taste and learning, who have invariably cultivated it, but is likewise highly beneficial to the bodily health, moral feeling, and intellectual improvement of the community.

"*Punica se quantis attollet gloria rebus!*"

With respect to its antiquity, we find it treated of by the most eminent writers upon rhetoric among the ancients, who not only class it among the beauties of language, but have stamped it with the dignity of a distinct figure of speech, assigning to it an appropriate name. I make no observations upon the injudicious attempts of some modern commentators to ally it to the *paranomasia*, it being evidently the *antanaclasis* of the rhetoricians. The great Aristotle (Rhet. ch. 11.) enumerates two or three different species of *παραγραμματα*, the name he gives to puns, in his remarks upon this figure, and cites examples of each kind, with expressions of commendation, from some of the most celebrated Greek authors. In Cicero's treatise on Oratory, a variety of instances of the *antanaclasis* are quoted, and highly praised by him for their wit. His own puns, with which his works abound, are more distinguished for their number than their excellence: humour does not appear to have been his forte, but his frequent attempts at punning sufficiently evince the high estimation in which it was held by himself and his contemporaries. The ancient poets, strange as it may appear, were not, in general, adepts in this art, if we except Aristophanes among the Greeks, and Ovid and Martial among the Latins. From the two last mentioned writers (the former of whom indeed would readily furnish a cento of puns) I beg leave to select two examples. The one is where Ovid makes Leander say, "*Posito cum veste timore*;" the other is the well-known epigram by Martial on the emperor Nero:

"*Quis negat Æneæ natum de stirpe Neronem?*"

***Sustulit hic matrem, Sustulit ille patrem.*"**

I adduce these examples, because Addison, after erroneously defining a pun to be merely "a conceit arising from the use of two words that agree in the sound, but differ in the sense," goes on to inform us that if translated into a different language, it will vanish in the experiment; in fact he would represent it as *vox et præterea nihil*, a sound, and nothing but a sound. Unquestionably there are a multitude of puns that might answer this description, but it is far from being applicable to all. In the two instances I have just brought forward, the words *posito* and *sustulit* can be exactly translated into English, and both the sense and the pun retained. The truth is, that Addison, like many more who have thought proper to be very severe on the talents of the punning fraternity, was evidently not very accurately acquainted with the nature of what he was attacking.

If the plea of antiquity can thus be justly advanced in favour of punning, the continued adherence of all nations in all periods to the practice, may likewise with reason be urged in its support. Nor are its ramifications of slight importance. It may be considered as the origin of technical terms, most of which, if properly analysed, will prove to be virtual puns or conundrums; as the parent of *double entendre* of every description; and even as containing the germs of that *slang* formerly confined to the lower walks of life, but, in our more enlightened days, emulously studied even among the Corinthian pillars of polished society.

The number of final letters, which among the French are mere ciphers in pronunciation, has always given them a decided advantage in puns of mere words over every other nation. Their writings and conversation are alike replete with them; but they are almost invariably of that kind alluded to by Addison, which are lost if clothed in any but their native dress. Indeed this is almost a necessary consequence of the very circumstance already alluded to, which ensures them such superior facility in the production of puns. A brace of these I shall present my readers with, both as exhibiting a strong confirmation of what I have above said, and as being of modern date, and, in my opinion, of sterling excellence. The first of these is the reply made by a Parisian wit, to a person who asked him what was the true distinction between a flea and a louse. He answered that they were only disciples of different philosophers: the lice being followers of Epictetus (*des pique-têtes*), and the fleas of Epicurus (*des piqueurs*). The other is an epigram, much talked off at the time of its appearance in the French metropolis, written by some wag, under a picture of Louis XVIII. painted by *Le Gros*, and placed in one of the public exhibitions. The striking resemblance of the head and neck of that monarch to those of a rabbit is well known; and of this circumstance the malicious epigrammatist thus happily avails himself in the pasquinade referred to:

Le Gros l'a peint! (*le gros lapin!*)
 Le Gros l'a peint!
 Notre bon souverain.
 De la peinture admirez la magie:
 Tout le monde à la fois s'écrie,
 Le Gros l'a peint!
 Le Gros l'a peint!

As I have assumed the privilege in these remarks of being as desultory and digressive as I please, I shall here notice what I term *macaroni punning*, effected by a fictitious *mélange* of different languages. Sometimes this will arise from the inspection of a single word. Who, for instance, can forbear smiling at the curious orthoepical coincidence by which an accommodating fair one is in Latin designated *meretrix*? This, however, is the simplest effort of the *macaroni* class, and far from implying that ingenuity visible in higher flights of the same kind, which are frequently conspicuous for their wit and pithiness. Lord Erskine's inscription on his tea chest, *Tu doces*, is of great merit in its way. Lord Norbury, I believe, has the reputation of having observed, upon seeing some young fellow vain of his personal attractions almost in tears at contemplating the manner in which the nocturnal attacks of a band of *jumpers* had disfigured his face, "*Fle-bit*, he will weep." His countryman Curran's reply to his rival counsel Egan, will not easily be forgotten. The latter, coming out of court, and observing on Curran's coat a certain *disgrace to the poll*, addressed him in the words of Virgil:

"Dic mihi, Damœta, cujum pecus? an Melibœi?"

Curran immediately replied by completing the passage:

"Non, verum Ægonis: nuper mihi tradidit Ægon."

Probably, however, Swift's impromptu quotation on seeing a Cremona violin swept off a table by a lady's mantua:

"Mantua, vœ! miseræ nimium vicina Cremonæ,"

will always stand at the head of puns of this class.

I own that I am particularly delighted with a good *macaroni* pun. It necessarily implies, not only superior wit, but a considerable fund of learning, on the part of the punster. And what is still better, it shows that this learning is free from the rust of pedantry, tending to enliven those around him, and not to create in him a repulsive conceit, and a haughty estrangement from society. His candle is not hidden under a bushel, but freely and cheerfully dispenses its light: His treasure is not kept in the form of useless hoarded bullion, but is converted into a valuable circulating medium, the coin being liberally and extensively distributed by its owner.

The inmates of universities have usually been remarked for their attachment to punning. The men of Cambridge, in particular, have ever, from their foundation, been distinguished by their excellence as paragrammatists. It surely not a little exalts this noble art, that those who have enjoyed peculiar opportunities of justly appreciating every thing connected both with abstruse and polite literature, should have sedulously cultivated it. And I think I may be allowed to say, in contradiction to the reiterated attempts of prejudice and stupidity to undervalue it, that I never met with a person incapable of some degree of excellence in punning, who was remarkable for any species of wit above the practical jokes of a merry-andrew.

But it is not only on its high antiquity, its extensive diffusion, or the distinguished authorities that can be adduced in support of it, that the claims of punning are founded. The philosopher who defined man to be τὸ ζῶον γελῶν, certainly selected the only characteristic besides that of speech, which particularly and exclusively distinguishes man from the brute creation.

"'Twas said of old, deny it now who can,
The only laughing animal is man.
The bear may leap, its lumpish cubs in view,
Or sportive cat her circling tail pursue;
The grin deep-lengthen pug's half-human face,
Or prick'd up ear confess the simp'ring ass:
In awkward gestures awkward mirth be shown,
Yet, spite of gesture, man still laughs alone."

Now to the exercise of this high and distinguished prerogative of our nature, what is a more certain stimulant than a pun? If it be good, you laugh at the pun; if bad, at the punster; and in either case, he is almost certain to laugh himself. Moreover, the punster is one of all others, "*quem jocus risusque circumvolat*;" not only witty himself, but the cause of wit in others; for it is rarely, indeed, in the social circle, that one pun is not the signal for a series of others. The cards are generally played after the first is led, till the suit is fairly out.

But laughter is not only one of the principal faculties which distinguish man from inferior animals; it likewise contributes greatly to the promotion and preservation of health. "Laugh and grow fat," is a very old and a very wise adage.

And observe, the fat which thus increaseth the ribs is wholesome, good, firm fat, bearing no resemblance whatever to the adipose envelope of the bloated and corpulent. Those who are clothed

with laughter-begotten fat are, moreover, in general, of humour frank and free, cordial, cheerful, and enterprising; as dissimilar to the indolent, arthritic, or the selfish gourmand, as to the cadaverous, saturnine, acetous beings who stalk about like so many skeletons, galvanised into temporary motion, and presenting a *memento mori* to all they meet. And if such be the genial, the beneficial, effects of laughter, can we laud too highly the practice of punning, that most apt and prompt instrument of promoting it?

In another point of view, too, this art doth not a little contribute to the advancement and improvement of moral feeling. How often have the asperities incident to conversation been instantly softened down by the means of a well-timed pun? How many a rising storm of colloquial debate and controversial wrath has been dispelled by the same salutary agency, when wisdom would have failed to convince, or mediation to conciliate? The able punster has perhaps more frequent opportunities than any other character, of securing the blessing pronounced upon the peace-maker.

The pious Dr. Watts, in his Introduction to Logic, has commented on the moral as well as literary evils arising from the number of equivocal and the comparative paucity of univocal words. Now the knowledge of a disease being half its cure, who is so likely to be exempt from the evils arising from the above-mentioned sources as the punster? Every fresh touch of his art may be considered as a discovery of some more of these dangerous equivocals, and indeed his whole life may be regarded as a philanthropic voyage in quest of them, combining the double advantage of exciting mirth by their timely production, and affording a salutary warning to the hearer against the employment of such Proteus terms in grave and serious discussion. Thus again we see the paragrammatist enabled to contribute in a high degree to the social enjoyment, literary improvement, and moral amelioration of his fellow creatures.

If wit consists principally, as the first of modern philosophers has affirmed, in the unexpected association of ideas apparently far removed in their nature from each other, punning must, in its very essence, claim to rank in the highest class of wit. And how must the frequent exercise of searching for such associations, and bringing them however recondite to light, sharpen the intellect of the individual engaged in it! We have already adverted to the general practice of this art among the members of our universities; we may likewise observe that the learned body of the law, a body distinguished perhaps beyond any other for their superior shrewdness, and extent of general information, are universally partial to it. The barrister who pleads, and the judge who directs, are alike ambitious to display their excellence in this highly prized art; and justice herself, though for the sake of her character she must needs be blind, is rarely found deaf to the sallies of the punster.

Ohe! jam satis est. Sufficient, we are persuaded, has been said to satisfy all persons of the value and excellence of punning, except indeed the obstinately incredulous; and such, as a just punishment, we would excommunicate for ever from the enjoyment of puns, and the society of punsters. Can we pronounce a severer doom?

But as the best of things are the most liable to abuses, so has the cause of punning suffered much from the want of judgment evinced by many of its votaries. Anxious, as far as possible, to contribute to maintaining this noble art in the possession of its well-merited reputation, we venture a few words of caution to some of its professors on the errors too frequently committed by them.

Imprimis, a pun, like an epigram, is worth little indeed if the point can be anticipated. Hence proper names, though they have in some few instances been successfully worked upon, are in general bad materials for the punster. The attempt to pun upon Black, White, Green, Brown, Scott, England, and *id genus omne*, if productive of any laughter, is of that only which is excited by the imbecility and empty pretensions of him who makes it. In justice to our contemporary John Bull, we must observe that on this very dangerous ground, he is almost the only person who has had the singular felicity of uniformly appearing with success.

For the same reason that we object to proper names, we need scarcely observe that all trite puns are detestable. There are a number of words, such as *heart, love, soul, last, grave*, and a host of

others, that have been fairly worn thread-bare in the service. Let him whose wit is not competent to discover some other sources than these hackneyed ones, be a listener, but by no means a speaker in a circle of punsters. *Decies repetita placebit*, however just it may be as the criterion of merit in a poem, will never do for a pun, one of whose chief excellencies is novelty, – nay, which often, however rich at the moment of its utterance, will not successfully admit of repetition, even to those who have never before heard it, at another time and under different circumstances.

A pun can rarely be considered very good, which involves a difference of orthography. It appears like a descent from its true dignity to the level of a common conundrum.

Lastly, let every punster bear in mind, that punning is only the sauce of conversation, and that he who thinks to entertain by introducing it continually into his discourse, resembles a man who should present me with a dish of Cayenne pepper alone by way of a meal. It may likewise be observed, that what is usually called an inveterate, is never a good punster. The constant desire of display, by accustoming himself to be contented with mediocrity, or something below it, almost disqualifies him from uttering any thing above it. We may say with justice, "a pun spoken in good season, how good is it!" Time, and place, and persons too, must be regarded. The punster, while he enlivens conversation, is one of the greatest acquisitions to a company; when he only interrupts it, he is one of its greatest nuisances. Much more could we add concerning both the theory and practice of this art, but we would not willingly become tedious. Gentle reader, whosoever thou art, receive in good part what we have here written; imbue thyself with such a love of punning, and such a sense of its dignity, that thy efforts may exalt and not degrade it: so shalt thou merit the good wish which, with a sincere heart, we now bestow upon thee: Mayest thou become one of the warmest admirers of punning, and shine as one of the first of punsters!

BERNARD BLACKMANTLE

THE ORIGIN OF PUNNING: FROM PLATO'S SYMPOSIACKS

BY DR. SHERIDAN

Once on a time in merry mood,
Jove made a Pun of flesh and blood:
A double two-faced living creature,
Androgynos, of two-fold nature,
For back to back with single skin
He bound the male and female in;
So much alike, so near the same,
They stuck as closely as their name.
Whatever words the male exprest,
The female turn'd them to a jest;
Whatever words the female spoke,
The male converted to a joke:
So, in this form of man and wife
They led a merry punning life.
The gods from heaven descend to earth,
Drawn down by their alluring mirth;
So well they seem'd to like the sport,
Jove could not get them back to court.
Th' infernal gods ascend as well,
Drawn up by magic puns from hell.
Judges and furies quit their post,
And not a soul to mind a ghost.
'Heyday!' says Jove: says Pluto too,
'I think the Devil's here to do;
Here's hell broke loose, and heaven's quite empty;
We scarce have left one god in twenty.
Pray what has set them all a-running? —
'Dear brother, nothing else but punning.
Behold that double creature yonder
Delights them with a double *entendre*.'
'Odds-fish,' says Pluto, 'where's your thunder?
Let's drive, and split this thing asunder!'
'That's right,' quoth Jove; with that he threw
A bolt, and split it into two;
And when the thing was split in twain,
Why then it punn'd as much again.
"Tis thus the diamonds we refine,
The more we cut, the more they shine;
And ever since your men of wit,
Until they're cut, can't pun a bit.

So take a starling when 'tis young,
And down the middle slit the tongue,
With groat or sixpence, 'tis no matter,
You'll find the bird will doubly chatter.
'Upon the whole, dear Pluto, you know,
'Tis well I did not slit my Juno!
For, had I done't, whene'er she'd scold me,
She'd make the heavens too hot to hold me.'
The gods, upon this application,
Return'd each to his habitation,
Extremely pleas'd with this new joke;
The best, they swore, he ever spoke.

**ARS PUN-ICA, SIVE FLOS LINGUARUM;
THE ART OF PUNNING,**

OR,

THE FLOWER OF LANGUAGES:

IN SEVENTY-NINE RULES:

FOR THE FURTHER IMPROVEMENT OF CONVERSATION,

AND HELP OF MEMORY

BY THE

LABOUR AND INDUSTRY OF TOM PUN-SIBI

"Ex ambiguâ dictâ vel argutissima putantur; sed non semper in joco, sæpe etiam in gravitate versantur. Ingeniosi enim videtur, vim verbi in aliud atque cæteri accipiant, posse ducere."

Cicero, de Oratore, Lib. ii. § 61, 2.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

SIR JOHN SCRUB, BART

AND WINE-MERCHANT,

THIS DEDICATION IS HUMBLY PRESENTED BY THE AUTHOR

Your honour's character is too well known in the world to stand in need of a dedication; but I can tell you, that my fortune is not so well settled but I stand in need of a patron. And therefore, since I am to write a dedication, I must, for decency, proceed in the usual method.

First, I then proclaim to the world your high and illustrious birth: that you are, by the father's side, descended from the most ancient and celebrated family of Rome, the Cascas; by the mother's, from Earl Percy. Some indeed have been so malicious as to say, your grandmother *kill'd-her-kin*: but, I think if the authors of the report were found out, they ought to be *hampered*. I will allow that the world exclaims deservedly against your *mother*, because she is *no friend to the bottle*; otherwise they would deserve a *firkin*, as having no *grounds* for what they say. However, I do not think it can sully your *fine* and *bright* reputation; for the *credit* you gained at the battle of *Hogshed*, against the Duke of *Burgundy*, who felt no *sham-pain*, when you *forced* him to sink beneath your power, and gave his whole army a *brush*, may in time turn to your account; for, to my knowledge, it put his highness upon the *fret*. This indeed was no less *racking* to the king his master, who found himself *gross-lee* mistaken in catching a *tartar*. For the whole world allowed, that you brought him a *peg* lower, by giving him the *parting-blow*, and making all his *rogues in buckram* to *run*. Not to mention your great *a-gillity*, though you are past your *prim-age*; and may you never *lack-age*, with a *sparkling* wit, and *brisk* imagination! May your honour also *wear* long, beyond the common *scantling* of human life, and constantly proceed in your musical diversions of *pipe* and *sack-but*, hunting with *tarriers*, &c. and may your good humour in saying, "*I am-phor-a-bottle*," never be lost to the joy of all them that drink your *wine* for nothing, and especially of,

Your humble servant,
Tom Pun-Sibi.

A SPECIMEN;

A SPICE I MEAN

PREFACE

*Hæe nos, ab imis Pun-icorum annalibus
Prolata, longo tempore edidimus tibi.*Fest.

I've raked the ashes of the dead, to show
Puns were in vogue five thousand years ago.

The great and singular advantages of Punning, and the lustre it gives to conversation, are commonly so little known in the world, that scarce one man of learning in fifty, to their shame be it spoken, appears to have the least tincture of it in his discourse. This I can impute to nothing but that it hath not been reduced to a *science*; and indeed Cicero seemed long ago to wish for it, as we may gather from his second book de Oratore¹, where he has this remarkable passage: "Suavis autem est et vehementer sæpe utilis jocus et facetiæ cum ambiguitate – in quibus tu longè aliis meâ sententiâ, Cæsar, excellis: quo magis mihi etiam testis esse potes, aut nullam esse artem salis, aut, si qua est, eam nos tu potissimum docebis." "Punning is extremely delightful, and oftentimes very profitable; in which, as far as I can judge, Cæsar, you excel all mankind; for which reason you may inform me, whether there be any art of Punning; or, if there be, I beseech you, above all things, to instruct me in it." So much was this great man affected with the art, and such a noble idea did he conceive of it, that he gave Cæsar the preference to all mankind, only on account of that accomplishment!

Let critics say what they will, I will venture to affirm, that Punning, of all arts and sciences, is the most extraordinary: for all others are circumscribed by certain bounds; but this alone is found to have no limits, because to excel therein requires a more extensive knowledge of all things. A Punner must be a man of the greatest natural abilities, and of the best accomplishments: his wit must be poignant and fruitful, his understanding clear and distinct, his imagination delicate and cheerful; he must have an extraordinary elevation of soul, far above all mean and low conceptions; and these must be sustained with a vivacity fit to express his ideas, with that grace and beauty, that strength and sweetness, which become sentiments so truly noble and sublime.

And now, lest I should be suspected of imposing upon my reader, I must entreat him to consider how high Plato has carried his sentiments of this art (and Plato is allowed by all men to have seen farther into Heaven than any Heathen either before or since). Does not he say positively, in his Cratylus, "Jocos et Dii amant," the gods themselves love Punning? which I am apt to believe from Homer's ἀσβεστος γέλως, unextinguished laughter; because there is no other motive could cause such continued merriment among the gods.

As to the antiquity of this art, Buxtorf proves it to be very early among the Chaldeans; which any one may see at large, who will read what he says upon the word פִּנּוּן Pun, Vocula est Chaldæis familiarissima, &c. "It is a word that is most frequently in use among the Chaldeans," who were first instructed in the methods of punning by their magi, and gained such reputation, that Ptolemæus

¹ Lib. ii. § liv.

Philo-punnæus sent for six of those learned priests, to propagate their doctrine of puns in six of his principal cities; which they did with such success, that his majesty ordered, by public edict, to have a full collection of all the puns made within his dominions for three years past; and this collection filled one large apartment of his library, having this following remarkable inscription over the door:

Ἰκτσειον ψυχης,

"The shop of the soul's physic²."

Some authors, but upon what ground it is uncertain, will have Pan, who in the Æolic dialect is called Pun, to be the author of Puns, because, they say, Pan being the god of universal nature, and Punning free of all languages, it is highly probable that it owes its first origin, as well as name, to this god: others again attribute it to Janus, and for this reason – Janus had two faces; and of consequence they conjectured every word he spoke had a double meaning. But, however, I give little credit to these opinions, which I am apt to believe were broached in the dark and fabulous ages of the world; for I doubt, before the first Olympiad, there can be no great dependence upon profane history.

I am much more inclined to give credit to Buxtorf; nor is it improbable that Pythagoras, who spent twenty-eight years at Egypt in his studies, brought this art, together with some arcana of philosophy, into Greece; the reason for which might be, that philosophy and punning were a mutual assistance to each other: "For," says he, "puns are like so many torch-lights in the head, that give the soul a very distinct view of those images, which she before seemed to grope after as if she had been imprisoned in a dungeon." From whence he looked upon puns to be so sacred, and had such a regard to them, that he left a precept to his disciples, forbidding them to eat beans, because they were called in Greek πυννοι. "Let not," says he, "one grain of the seeds be lost; but preserve and scatter them over all Greece, that both our gardens and our fields may flourish with a vegetable, which, on account of its name, not only brings an honour to our country, but, as it disperses its effluvia in the air, may also, by a secret impulse, prepare the soul for punning, which I esteem the first and great felicity of life."

This art being so very well recommended by so great a man, it was not long before it spread through all Greece, and at last was looked upon to be such a necessary accomplishment, that no person was admitted to a feast who was not first examined, and if he were found ignorant of punning, he was dismissed with Ἐκάς ἐσε, βέζηλοι, "Hence, ye profane!"

If any one doubts the truth of what I say, let him consult the apophthegms of Plutarch, who, after he had passed several encomiums upon this art, gives some account of persons eminent in it; among which (to shorten my preface) I choose one of the most illustrious examples, and will entertain the courteous reader with the following story: "King Philip had his collar-bone broken in a battle; and his physician expecting money of him every visit, the king reproved him with a pun, saying he had the key in his own hands." For the word κλέεις, in the original, signifies both a key and a collar-bone³.

We have also several puns recorded in Diogenes Laertius's "Lives of the Philosophers;" and those made by the wisest and gravest men among them, even by Diogenes the cynick, who, although pretending to withstand the irresistible charms of punning, was cursed with the name of an abhorrer Yet, in spite of all his ill-nature and affectation (for he was a tub-preacher), he made so excellent a pun, that Scaliger said, "He would rather have been author of it, than king of Navarre." The story is as follows: Didymus (not Didymus the commentator upon Homer, but a famous rake among the ladies at Athens) having taken in hand to cure a virgin's eye that was sore, had this caution given him

² Vide Joseph. Bengor. Chronic. in Edit. Georg. Homedidæ. Scriem Godoliæ Tradit. Hebraic. Corpus Paradosion Titulo Megill. c. i. § 8. Chronic. Samarit. Abulphetachi. Megillat. Taanit.

³ Vide Plut. Apophth. p. 177.

by Diogenes, "Take care you do not corrupt your pupil." The word κόρα signifies both the pupil of the eye and a virgin⁴.

It would be endless to produce all the authorities that might be gathered, from Diodorus Siculus, Herodotus, Proconosius, Bergæus, Dionysius Halicarnassensis, Lycophron, Pindar, Apollonius, Menander, Aristophanes, Corinthus Cous, Nonnus, Demosthenes, Euripides, Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, &c.; from every one of which I should have produced some quotations, were it not that we are so unfortunate in this kingdom not to have Greek types sufficient for such an undertaking⁵: for want of which, I have been put to the necessity, in the word κόρα, of writing an *alpha* for an *éta*.

However, I believe it will not be amiss to bring some few testimonies, to show in what great esteem the art of punning was among the most refined wits at Rome, and that in the most polite ages, as will appear from the following quotations.

Quintilian says⁶, "Urbanitas est virtus quædam, in breve dictum, verum sensu duplici, coacta, et apta ad delectandos homines," &c. Thus translated, "Punning is a virtue, comprised in a short expression, with a double meaning, and fitted to delight the ladies."

Lucretius also,

Quò magis æternum da dictis, Diva, leporem.
"Goddess, eternal puns on me bestow."

And elsewhere,

Omnia enim lepidi magis admirantur, amântque
Germanis quæ sub verbis latitantia cernunt:
Verbaque constituunt simili fucata sonore,
Nec simili sensu, sed quæ mentita placent.

"All men of mirth and sense admire and love
Those words which like twin-brothers doubtful prove;
When the same sounds a different sense disguise,
In being deceived the greatest pleasure lies."

Thus Claudian:

Vocibus alternant sensus, fraudisque jocosæ,
Vim duplicem rident, lacrymosaque gaudia miscent.

"From word to word th' ambiguous sense is play'd;
Laughing succeeds, and joyful tears are shed."

And Martial:

Sit mihi, Cinna, comes, salibus dictisque facetus,
Qui sapit ambiguos fundere ab ore sonos.

⁴ See Laërtius.

⁵ Though it is no uncommon thing for a country printer to be without Greek types, this could scarcely be a serious complaint at Dublin in 1719.

⁶ Institut. Orator. lib. vi. p. 265.

"Cinna, give me the man, when all is done,
That wisely knows to crack a jest and pun."

Petronius likewise will tell you,

Dicta, sales, risus, urbana crepundia vocum,
Ingenii facilis quæ documenta dabunt.

"Jokes, repartees, and laugh, and pun polite,
Are the true test to prove a man is right."

And Lucan:

Illi est imperium risus, qui fraude leporis
Ambigua fallens, humeros quatit usque solutis
Nexibus, ac tremuli trepidant curvamina dorsi,
Et jecur, et cordis fibras, et pandit anhelas
Pulmonis latebras —

"He's king of mirth, that slightly cheats our sense
With pun ambiguous, pleasing in suspense;
The shoulders lax become, the bending back
Upheaved with laughter, makes our ribs to crack;
E'en to the liver he can joys impart,
And play upon the fibres of the heart;
Open the chambers of *longues*⁷, and there
Give longer life in laughing, than in air."

But to come nearer home, and our own times; we know that France, in the late reign, was the seat of learning and policy; and what made it so, but the great encouragement the king gave punners above any other men: for it is too notorious, to quote any author for it, that Lewis le Grand gave a hundred pistoles for one single pun-motto, made upon an abbot, who died in a field, having a lily growing out of his a – :

"Habe mortem præ oculis.
Abbé mort en prez au culiz."

Nor was his bounty less to Monsieur de Ferry de Lageltre the painter (though the pun and the picture turned against himself), who drew his majesty shooting, and at some distance from him another man aiming at the same fowl, who was withheld by a third person, pointing at the king, with these words from his mouth,

"Ne voyez vous le Roy tirant?"

Having now, from the best authorities, plainly proved the antiquity and excellence of the art of punning, nothing remains but to give some general directions as to the manner how this science is to be taught.

⁷ Potius *lungs*, as a Dutch commentator would observe.

1. Let the husband teach his wife to read it.
2. Let her be appointed to teach her children.
3. Let the head servant of the family instruct all the rest, and that every morning before the master and mistress are up.
4. The masters and misses are to repeat a rule every day, with the examples; and every visiting-day be brought up, to show the company what fine memories they have.
5. They must go ten times through the book, before they be allowed to aim at a pun.
6. They must every day of their lives repeat six synonymous words, or words like in sound, before they be allowed to sit down to dinner, – such as

Assent, Ascent.

A Lass, Alas.

Bark, Barque.

Alter, Altar.

A Peer, Appear.

Barbery, Barberrie.

They are all to be found in metre, most laboriously compiled by the learned author of "The English School-master," printed anno 1641, London edit. p. 52.

7. If any eldest son has not a capacity to attain to this science, let him be disinherited as *non-compos*, and the estate given to the next hopeful child.

– Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti: si non, his utere mecum⁸.

"If any man can better rules impart,
I'll give him leave to do't with all my heart!"

⁸ Hor. Ep. I. i. 67.

A

PARAGRAPH OF THE FIRST PREFACE

THAT WAS OMITTED,

WHICH THE READER (ACCORDING TO HIS JUDGMENT OR DISCRETION) MAY INSERT WHERE HE PLEASES

There is a remarkable passage in Petronius Arbiter, which plainly proves, by a royal example, that punning was a necessary ingredient to make an entertainment agreeable. The words are these: "Ingerebat nihilominus Trimalchio lentissima voce, Carpe. Ego, suspicatus ad aliquam urbanitatem toties iteratam vocem pertinere, non erubui eum qui supra me accumbebat hoc ipsum interrogare. At ille qui sæpius ejusmodi ludos spectaverat, Vides, inquit, illum qui obsonium carpit, Carpus vocatur. Itaque quotiescunque dicit Carpe, eodem verbo et vocat et imperat." And it is further remarkable, that every day of his life he made the same pun at dinner and supper.

A SECOND PREFACE

Lest my modesty should be called in question, for venturing to appear in print, in an age so famous for politeness and ingenuity, I think I am bound to say this in my own defence, that these few sheets were not designed to be made public, as being written for my own private use: but what will not the importunity of friends conquer? they were no sooner discovered in my study, but my merry friend George Rochfort, my learned acquaintance Patrick Delany, and my much honoured patron Jonathan Swift, all unanimously agreed, that I should do my own reputation and the world that justice, as to send "such a treasure of knowledge" (as they were pleased to express themselves) to the press. As for the work itself, I may venture to say, it is a work of time and experience, and entirely unattempted before. For which reason, I hope the candid reader will be favourable in his judgment upon it, and consider that all sciences in their infancy have been weak and feeble. The next age may supply where I have been defective; and the next perhaps may produce a Sir Isaac in punning. We know that logicians first spun out reason in categories, predicaments, and enunciations; and at last they came to wind up their bottoms in syllogisms, which is the completing of that science.

The Chaldeans began the mathematics, in which the Egyptians flourished. Then these, crossing the sea by the means of Thales the Milesian, came into Greece, where they were improved very much by Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, and Ænopides of Chios. These were followed by Briso, Antipho, Hippocrates, &c. But the excellence of the algebraic art was begun by Geber, an Arabian astronomer (whence as is conceived the word *algebra* took its rise), and was much since improved by Cardanus, Tartaglia, Clavius, Stevinus, Ghetaldus, Herigenius, Fran. Van Schooten, Florida de Beaune, &c.

But to return to the Art of Punning again; the progress and improvement of which, I hope, will be equal to the sciences I have mentioned; or to any superior to them, if there be such: reader, I must trespass a little longer on your patience, and tell you an old maxim, *Bonum quo communius, eo melius*, "Good, the more common, the better it is." You see, I have in imitation of the industrious bee gathered my honey from various flowers; but yet I cannot say, without some diminution and loss to the persons from whom I have taken the examples to my rules, who are likely never to use their puns again.

And here to avoid the imputation of ingratitude, I must declare to the world, that my worthy friend Dr. R – , who is singularly remarkable for his unparalleled skill in punning, and a most industrious promoter of it, has been a very great instrument in bringing this work to light, as well by animating me to proceed in it, as by endeavouring to procure a good letter for the impression.

The favourable acceptance that my puns have met with in some private companies, makes me flatter myself, that my labours therein will be candidly accepted, as they have been cordially intended to serve my native country.

Tom Pun-sibi.

*From my Study, up one Pair of
Stairs, ill-contrived Streetwards,
August 9th, 1719.*

THE ART OF PUNNING

"Punnata dicuntur, id ipsum, quod sunt, aliorum esse dicuntur, aut alio quovis modo ad aliud referuntur."

Puns, in their very nature and constitution, have a relation to something else; or, if they have not, any other reason why will serve as well.

The Physical Definition of Punning, according to Cardan.

Punning is an art of harmonious jingling upon words, which, passing in at the ears, and falling upon the diaphragma, excites a titillary motion in those parts; and this being conveyed by the animal spirits into the muscles of the face, raises the cockles of the heart.

The Moral Definition of Punning.

Punning is a virtue that most effectually promotes the end of good fellowship, which is laughing.

N.B. I design to make the most celebrated punners in these kingdoms examples to the following rules.

Rule 1. The capital Rule. He that puns, must have a head for it; that is, he must be a man of letters, of a sprightly and fine imagination, whatever men may think of his judgment; like Dr. Swift⁹, who said, when a lady threw down a Cremona-fiddle with a frisk of her mantua,

"Mantua væ miseræ nimium vicina Cremonæ!"

Or if you would have a more obvious reason, St. Dennis never made a pun after his head was cut off. Vid. Popish Legend, tom. lxxviii. p. 15,000.

R. 2. The rule of Forehead. He must have good assurance, like my Lord B – , who puns in all companies.

R. 3. The Brazen Rule. He must have better assurance, like Brigadier C – , who said, 'That, as he was passing through a street, he made to a country fellow who had a hare swinging on a stick over his shoulder, and, giving it a shake, asked him whether it was his own *hair*, or a perriwig?' whereas it is a notorious Oxford jest.

R. 4. The Rule of Impudence. He must have the best assurance, like Dr. D – , who, although I had in three fair combats worsted him, yet had the impudence to challenge me a fourth time.

R. 5. Any person may pun upon another man's puns about half an hour after he has made them; as Dr. E – and Mr. F – frequently do.

⁹ In the early editions of the tract, this admirable pun is ascribed to Dr. Delany.

I remember one day I was in company with them, and upon Major G – saying, 'That he would leave me the gout for a legacy,' I made answer, and told the company, 'I should be sorry to have such a *leg as he*.' They both snapped it up in their turns, and had as much applause for the pun as I had.

R. 6. The Rule of Pun upon Pun. All puns made upon the word pun are to be esteemed as so much old gold. *Ex. gr.* suppose two famous punsters should contend for the superiority, and a man should wittily say, 'That is a *Carthaginian* war:'

Q. How, sir?

A. Why, sir, it is a *Pun-ick* war.

R. 7. The Socratic Rule is, to instruct others by way of question and answer.

Q. Who was the first drawer?

A. *Potiphar*.

Q. Which is the seat of the spleen?

A. The *hips*.

Q. Who were the first bakers?

A. The *Crustumenians*. (Masters of the Rolls, quoth Capt. Wolseley).

Q. Where did the first hermaphrodites come from?

A. *Middle-sex*.

Q. What part of England has the most *dogs*?

A. *Bark-shire*.

Q. From whence come the first *tumblers*?

A. From *Somerset*.

Q. Who were the first *mortgagers of land*?

A. The people of *Cumber-land*.

Q. What men in the world are the best *soldiers*?

A. Your red-haired men, because they always carry their *fire-locks* upon their shoulders.

Q. Why should a man in debt be called a *diver*?

A. Because he has *dipped* over head and ears.

Q. Why are ladies of late years well qualified for hunting?

A. Because they come with a *hoop* and a *hollow*.

Q. Why are the Presbyterians, Independents, &c. said to be vermin?

A. Because they are *in-sects*.

Q. Where were the first *breeches* made?

A. At *Thy-atira*.

Q. Who were the first *gold-finders*?

A. The *Turditani*.

Q. What part of the world is best to *feed dogs* in?

A. *Lap-land*.

Q. What prince in the world should have a *boar* for his arms?

A. The duke of *Tusk-any*.

Q. Where do the best *corn-cutters* live?

A. At *Leg-horn*.

Q. Why are horses with grease in their heels the best racers?

A. Because their heels are given to *running*.

Q. What is the reason that rats and mice are so much afraid of base violins and fiddles?

A. Because they are strung with *cat-gut*.

Q. If a lawyer is a whig, and pretends to be a Tory, or *vice versa*, why should his gown be stripped off?

A. Because he is guilty of *sham-party*.

Q. How many animals are concerned in the formation of the *English* tongue?

A. According to *Buck-anan*, a great number; viz. *cat-egorical*, *dog-matical*, *crow-nological*, *flea-botomy*, *fish-ognomy*, *squirril-ity*, *rat-ification*, *mouse-olæum*, *pus-illanimity*, *hare-editary*, *ass-tronomy*, *jay-ography*, *stag-yrite*, *duck-tility*.

Q. Where were the first *hams* made?

A. They were made in the temple of *Jupiter Hammon*, by the *Hamadryades*; one of them (if we may depend upon *Baker's Chronicle*) was sent as a present to a gentleman in *Ham-shire*, of the family of the *Ham-iltons*, who immediately sent it to *Ham-ton-court*, where it was hung up by a string in the hall, by way of rarity, whence we have the English phrase *ham-strung*.

Thus did great Socrates improve the mind,
By questions useful since to all mankind;
For, when the purblind soul no farther saw,
Than length of nose, into dark Nature's law,
His method clear'd up all, enlarged the sight,
And so he taught his pupils with *day-light*.

R. 8. The Rule of Interruption. Although the company be engaged in a discourse of the most serious consequence, it is and may be lawful to interrupt them with a pun. *Ex. gr.* suppose them poring over a problem in mathematics, you may, without offence, ask them 'How go *squares* with them?' You may say too, 'That, being too intent upon those figures, they are become *cycloeid*, i. e. *sickly-eyed*; for which they are a pack of *loga-rithms*, i. e. *loggerheads*.' Vide R. 34.

R. 9. The Rule of Risibility. A man must be the first that laughs at his own pun; as *Martial* advises:

"*Qui studet alterius risum captare lepore,
Imprimis rictum contrahat ipse suum.*"

"He that would move another man to laughter,
Must first begin, and t'other soon comes after."

R. 10. The Rule of Retaliation obliges you, if a man makes fifty puns, to return all, or the most of them, in the same kind. As for instance: Sir W – sent me a catalogue of Mrs. Prudence's scholars, and desired my advice as to the management of them:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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